

Red Moon Rising

by RadicalT0aster

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Summary: When a rare full moon takes a dramatic turn, causing the girls' powers to go haywire, can they make it through the night with friendship prevailing? Or will things take a turn for the worse? ON INDEFINITE HIATUS.

1. Premonition

I do not own H2O: Just Add Water**â€”that **_**is rightfully owned by Viacom. **_**I**_**, however, own the storyline. Because if I **_**did**_** own H2O: Just Add Water, I probably wouldn't be sitting here at my computer writing this, now would I? ;-)****

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><p>Summary: When a rare full moon takes a dramatic turn, causing the girls' powers to go haywire, can they make it through the night with friendship prevailing? Or will things take a turn for the worse?

Author's note: Takes place post season two. Season three has not occurred yet.

Chapter 1**

"Premonition"**

Cleo Sertori smiled at the by-now-familiar yet still exhilarating tingle as the crisp, cool water ran through her thick, long brown hair. Coral reefs housing brightly colored fish of all shapes and sizes passed by slowly as she rolled her body in a wave-like motion, arm extended and joined in front. Streams of sunlight sliced easily through the clear water and danced along the scales of her orange tail that covered the length of her body from the waist down.

Cleo glanced to her right and was met with an equally as joyful Emma

Gilbert, her long and athletic figure mirroring the movements of her fellow mermaid's.

Mentally (as it's hard to do so underwater, despite being able to hold her breath for a whopping _fifteen _minutes), Cleo laughed at how far she had come, how drastically her life had changed in a single event that seemed to have occurred so long ago now.

Of course, whilst the change could easily be classified as "for the better" in a sense, avoiding every single drop of water in a foot diameter around other peopleâ€”including her parents and downright annoying siblingâ€”could be a challenge. Lucky she and her two best friends could rely on people like Lewis and Zane to watch their backs and keep their rather extraordinary secret... well, exactly that: _secret._

Still, Cleo felt like the shy, rather awkward girl who had actually been less-than-enthusiastic towards the idea of swimming was a total stranger to the girl she was today; a mermaid withâ€”as Rikki would most likely put itâ€”seriously cool kick-butt superpowers. _Well, I suppose controlling water _is_ pretty cool,_ Cleo thought as a sleek dolphin twirled playfully alongside the duo.

Waving their arms backwards to slow down and become stationary in the water, Emma grinned and jerked her head in the general direction of the moon pool; a silent challenge to race. Cleo rolled her eyes and snorted in response, resulting in a stream of bubbles to issue forth from her nostrils; but she nodded anyway. A little friendly competition could be fun, even if she didn't stand a chance against the prior swim team champ.

Emma counted down from three on her fingers. As soon as the last one receded, Cleo pushed off a small mound of coral and took off in pursuit of Emma, tail pumping profusely with only minimal effort. Sure enough, she was already lagging a good couple meters.

The increased speed left a streamline of bubbles in their wake. Swerving and spiraling and blinking away the bubbles left from Emma's path of underwater acrobatics, Cleo almost missed the rocky outline of the underwater entrance to the moon pool and glided to the surface.

Emma leaned back against the rock on her elbows. "And the champion remains undefeated." She laughed. "I even held back on speed for you, Cleo."

"Well who's to say _I_ didn't go easy on _you_?" Cleo challenged, feeling clever with herself. Surely Rikki could've come up with something more creative to throw back at Emma were she here. Speaking of which...

"Where's Rikki? She never misses our swims," Emma noted, and it was true. Rikki was usually the most eager of them all to go bounding into the water. Well, she _was_ the most enthusiastic about becoming a mermaid in the first place, so it was only to be expected.

Cleo shook her head. "She didn't answer her phone, and I couldn't find her after school."

Emma frowned at this piece of information. Rikki usually had her

phone on her at all timesâ€"or at least _most _of the time, if you count the wardrobe change that comes with being a mermaid. Unless she was out with Zane or had something going on, one could usually reach the devious blonde.

A thought struck Emma. "Maybe she's at the Juicenet."

Cleo nodded. "Yeah, it's worth a shot. Plus, I know you just want to see Ash," she added, wiggling her eyebrows.

Emma flushed. "N-No, I just... I mean, it's a full moon tonight, so I figured, why not? We'll be stuck in my house till tomorrow so I want to see him beforeâ€"

Cleo laughed. "So I'll take that as a yes?"

* * *

><p>Emma and Cleo walked through the beaded entrance of the stylish cafe known as Juicenet and scanned the many tables for Rikki. They found her and no other than Lewis in the booth in the corner of the room; Rikki disconnectedly stirring her juice with her straw and Lewis rapidly rambling and typing away just as fast on his laptop, undoubtedly about something scientific by the way he was gesturing with his arms.<p>

As they approached they caught bits and pieces of what he was saying; or rather, what they could _understand_.

"â€"and with the alignment of this particular group of celestial bodies, I predictâ€"

"Lewis!" Rikki said tiredly, annoyed. "For the last time, speak _English!_" As she noticed Cleo and Emma for the first time, she sat up a little straighter. "About time somebody erased me from this picture," she said casually, with a flair of her usual sarcasm.

"Yeah, we just got back from our swim. Where were you, by the way? You just kind of vanished after school today," Emma remarked as she and Cleo slid into the booth.

"Yeah, well, Captain Boredom hereâ€"

"That's _Mister _Captain Boredom to you."

"â€"_insisted _on dragging me off to show me his latest science fair program," Rikki continued as if Lewis hadn't just tried to interrupt.

"It's state-of-the-art!" Lewis said in defense of his machine.

Rikki leaned forward and raised her eyebrows in mock enthusiasm. "_Wow_, state-of-the-art you say? And is state-of-the-art geek for 'able to control the actual moon'?"

Lewis opened his mouth, hesitated, then closed it again. "No," he admitted.

Rikki pretended to dust off her hands. "And at long last, I rest my

case."

"Wait, you didn't let me finish. There's more," he added excitedly, knowing full well Emma and Cleo were in the dark.

"'Course there is."

Lewis ignored Rikki, but Cleo couldn't help laughing at their light back-and-forth banter; the majority of which Rikki had the upper hand. Go figure. Lewis turned the screen around so they could see what was on it. It appeared to be the paths of travel of all of the planets in the solar system. He took a deep breath and launched into a long explanation.

"See, tonight the full moon rises at precisely... eight thirty-seven P.M.," said Lewis after checking his watch, "and sets at seven fifty-two A.M. Exactly when the moon rises is also the time when Neptune and Mercury are in perfect alignment with each other."

"So...?" Emma prompted.

"So, since Mercury is the first planet from the sun, and obviously the hottest, and Neptune is one of the coldest planets being the eighth from the sun, not to mention having some water-like qualities, I think it could possibly affect your powers or throw them out of balance." Lewis's gaze traveled to settle primarily on Cleo as he finished, her being his girlfriend and everything. And since they had grown up together as close friends, and been the first to know of the whole mermaid ordeal, there would always be a certain protectiveness there.

But by now he's learned when too much is too much and was determined not to hover around her ears, or so they say.

"Don't worry, Lewis. We've got everything under control," Emma reassured him. "All the windows are boarded up, all faucets plugged up; no moonlight can get in, no water will be sitting around, and mum and dad are away for the whole weekend. Everything's according to plan. Right, Cleo?"

"Yup. Nothing to worry about," Cleo agreed.

Rikkiâ€œsurprisingly enoughâ€œhadn't commented. Cleo and Emma looked at her. Rikki twirled a strand of her curly hair between her fingers and had apparently found something incredibly interesting in the table in front of them.

Emma nudged her. "Hey."

Rikki's pale blue eyes snapped up to linger on Emma's darker ones. "Everything all right?"

"Yeah, yeah. Great. Never better."

Had Emma not known her any better she might have bought it. But the slightest change of tone of voice and how quickly her eyes broke contact gave it away and immediately contradicted her words.

"Come on, if something's bothering you, you can tell us," Cleo told

her as she reached across the table and took her hand. Rikki instinctively tensed at the contact, having not always been the touchy-feel-y type, but realizing she could be read like an open book right now, succumbed to her friends' concerned attempts at discovering the reason for her unease. Secretly, she was touched to have such great friends who she shared such a big secret with.

It's funny, Rikki thought. _One minute I'm messing with Zane Bennett's dinghy, the next I'm growing a tail after being hit by a sprinkler._ Now if _that_ _wasn't_ big news, she didn't know what was.

"I just..." She sighed. "I'm scared, that's all."

The two mermaids just sort of looked at her. After all, you normally don't find those words coming out of the mouth of Rikki Chadwick often.

But nobody is invincible. Everybody has some sort of fear; even Rikki.

"Every time I get moonstruck, it's... _dangerous._"

"It's not _that_ badâ€" tried Emma.

"I incinerated the forest on Mako and gave Zane the tan of his young life."

"Okay, so it wasn't exactly _good_, but we've faced the full moon since then. The worst that could happen is that we get a little... loopy," Cleo said truthfully.

"You mean develop a first-grader personality?"

"Yeah, that."

"But I just have this feeling. Like something unexpected is going to happen or something."

Lewis grinned. "So does that mean you're finally taking my words seriously?"

Rikki rolled her eyes to heaven. "If I say yes, will it make you happy?"

"Extremely so, yes."

"Then yes, this _one time_, I do," Rikki said with a sigh. Then she smirked her typical smirk and hit his shaggy blonde head upside the head lightly. "But don't get used to it."

* * *

><p>As the four prepared to leave the Juicenet and go to their respective houses to stock up for the long night ahead, Ash popped his head out of the back room.<p>

"Hey, Em!"

Emma turned before the doorway and smiled at him before looking back

at the others. "I'll meet up with you guys later."

"Okay. Later," Cleo agreed, but Rikki paused halfway in and halfway out the doorway. "Don't get carried away, you two," Rikki said with a wink and was shoved out the door by an apologetic-looking (but amused) Cleo.

As Emma pushed open the door to the back room, she was suddenly swept off her feet by a maroon-and-blue-striped employee and had her lips pressed to another set of smooth ones. After a moment she pulled away from Ash with a look of surprise.

"_That_ was my 'Thank you, Ash' for having me cover your shift tonight," Ash said flirtatiously as he set her back down on her feet. Emma still had her arms locked around Ash's neck.

"Yeah, I'm sorry about that, but it's a full moon and now that you're in on the wholeâ€" she dropped her voice to a whisper, "â€"mermaid thing... I mean, I really appreciate it and I promise I'll make it up to yâ€" "

Ash stopped her motor mouth with a laugh. "_Chill _out, Em," he joked, using the reference to her power. "I'm happy to help in any way I can." Emma beamed as he continued, intertwining her smaller fingers with his larger ones. "Now, you should go back to help the girls, and I have to get back to work. Can't have the manager slacking off, now can we?" He pecked her on the lips, causing a blush to appear on her cheeks.

Emma deflated and detached herself. "All right," she said, if somewhat reluctantly. Her cheerful demeanor quickly reignited though. "Be seeing you."

Ash stopped her briefly on her way out the door. "We're still on for tomorrow, right?"

Emma turned and grinned over her shoulder. "Dinner and a movie, right?"

Ash smiled in turn. "Dinner and movieâ€"your shout."

"Cool. Can't wait." And having the final word, Emma let the metal door swing closed behind her.

Little did she know that getting through tonight would be harder than anyone had expected and that Rikki's gut instinct would end up becoming more than she'd bargained for.

* * *

><p>To be continued...

The start of my first _H2O: Just Add Water_ fanfic. I hope you all enjoyed reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it! I plan on making this story multi-chapter in the future. But I'll leave it up to you guys.

Do you think I should continue?

**No clue on how often I'll be able to update. I suppose it depends

on how much progress I'll have made on the next chapter. Plus, I've got my other fan fictions to worry about, so we'll see how it all works out!**

Reviews, comments, questions, concernsâ€"any and all feedback is greatly appreciated!

Thanks for reading and please feel free to review! I promise to reply to each and every reviewer personally!

2. The Calm Before the Storm

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><p>Summary: When a rare full moon takes a dramatic turn, causing the girls' powers to go haywire, can they make it through the night with friendship prevailing? Or will things take a turn for the worse?

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Chapter 2

"The Calm Before the Storm"

"Back in a jiff," Rikki said with a wink and disappeared through the sliding glass door of the small caravan she and her father occupied. Cleo set down her small duffel bag and removed her pillow from under her arm andâ€" throwing it on top of her belongingsâ€"turned and allowed her eyes to wander in the meantime whilst Rikki grabbed her own things. Compared to her own home in the suburbs, the caravan park Rikki lived in was rather crowded with medium-sized, rather ragtag white trailers all clustered together as if you could never get close enough to your neighbor. _At least borrowing a cup of sugar is only a stroll away,_ Cleo thought amusingly.

At first, Cleo hadn't understood her friend's reluctance when it came to showing where she lived, seeing as how much time the three spent at both her and Emma's house, but she could see the debate in Rikki's eyes as she compared the two different kinds of living spaces. Sure, she sympathized with her towards the matter, but Rikki had made it quite clear some time ago that she and her fatherâ€"Terry, she believed was his nameâ€"didn't take charity. But hey, a crate to the head to remember, huh?

Cleo couldn't quite remember a scene quite like the one on that sunny day, to see one of your close friends lying unconscious in the white sands of Mako Island, bleeding from the head and not responding to the begs and pleads of those around her. It had definitely been a wakeup call that the trio needed to rely on each other through thick and thin, to see eye-to-eye, despite the difficulties of this, as Emma had pointed out, if rather bluntly. Emma and Rikki didn't _always_ agree with each otherâ€"heck, they're powers were _complete

_opposites by natureâ€"but friends were friends, and friends look out for each other. _Lucky Lewis had been there,_ Cleo mentally added, then sighed somewhat blissfully.

Lewis. He and Cleo had always been great friends since they were little, but there had always been something _more._ If only Charlotteâ€"Cleo frowned at the nameâ€"hadn't intervened, they could've hit things off a lot sooner. Not to mention Charlotte becoming a mermaid had been one of the most dangerous things to ever threaten their secret, second to Denmanâ€"Cleo mentally cursed that name, too. Plus, all the mermaid powers in the hands of one person... There was an unbalanced feeling to it all. But when it comes to three-on-one, three _always_ _wins.

Cleo had been getting so lost in her own thoughts, she didn't pull out of her own mind until Rikki waved her fingers in front of her face. "Earth to Cleo; you have Call Waiting."

"Huh? Oh, right. Sorry," Cleo stammered and picked up her things from where they were on the ground.

"Something wrong?" Rikki asked casually, the smallest hint of concern in her usually carefree voice.

"No, nothing's wrong. I was just thinking, that's all," Cleo said honestly as they took off along the beach, heading for Emma's. Rikki's sharp blue eyes seemed to piece right through her, and it didn't take long for her to put two and two together.

"Let me guess... Lewis." It wasn't a question. Or a guess, for that matter.

Cleo rolled her green eyes. "Well, yes, but other things, too." Nodding wordlessly, Rikki shoved her hands in her pockets and gazed outwards towards the sea, watching the waves crash and spread across the fine sand before receding, only to return once more. Breathing in the fresh salt air and feeling the wind run along and through her feathery light bangs, she felt strangely at home, and she didn't think it had anything to do with being a mermaid either. It was fun to just let her mind wander sometimes, or for a few moments, simply think nothing at all.

Not to mention the dull throb of a headache had been pounding nonstop behind her eyes since this morning, and it was driving her up the freaking wall. Some silence might help.

Cleo and Rikki trekked along to the Gilbert house in comfortable silence, Rikki already lost in her own world, Cleo thinking of what to say to break the silence, among other things. Then Cleo thought of something sufficient to say to the girl walking next to her.

"So how are you and Zane?" she asked, a smile tugging at the corners of her mouth. While at first she and Emma definitely DID NOT approve of Rikki and Zane going outâ€"him at one time being The Great Mermaid Hunter or somethingâ€"the events since then have straightened that ordeal out. Plus, he made Rikki happy, and who was she to disapprove of _that? _Zane had proved himself on occasion, and they trusted him to keep their secret.

"Fine," Rikki said briefly, not taking her eye off the

shoreline.

Cleo noted the monotone note in her voice. "Doesn't sound like it."

"No, no, we're great, really. He's just been busy going to corporate conventions with his dad and stuff, but he'll be back on Monday." It appeared some of her usual chipper attitude had been revived.

Cleo grinned and nudged her playfully. "Well that's only two days away. I'll bet he's got something special planned. Like a surprise gift or a romantic dinner orâ€œ"

"Hello?" Rikki said, folding her fingers to form something of a phone shape and holding it up to her ear. "Yeah...yeah, she's here...sure, I'll ask her..." She paused in her imaginary conversation and lowered her hand. "It's planet Earthâ€œthey're wondering when you're coming back, Cleo."

Cleo, slightly offended, started laughing. "Oh, shut it," she said, shoving her playfully again. Rikki took no offence and starting laughing along with her friend, feeling slightly accomplished with herself. _Cleo's such a romantic,_ Rikki thought._ No way would Zane go that far...right? I mean, sure, I took his _engraved_ iPod gift, but that was a one-time thing. Surely he wouldn'tâ€œ"

But then a sudden flair of head pain interrupted her thoughts and she grimaced, faltering ever so slightly in her step. But it faded as soon as it had started.

Cleo noticed her very brief moment of pain and became concerned. "Everything all right?"

Rikki, as hard as she tried to hide it, knew Cleo had seen her slight hesitation. So she did what she did best; she lied. "Yeah, I'm fine." Evidently, her little white lie wasn't as convincing as it had sounded in her head because Cleo narrowed her eyes.

"You're sure?"

Rikki opened her mouth to respond, but sure enough, another short jabbing sensation hit her behind the eyes. _Damn brain,_ she thought venomously. _Fine, abandon your own maker; see if I care._ Finally she sighed.

"Yeah, it's just this small headache that's been bugging me all day. It'll go away soon, though."

Cleo looked skeptical, but Rikki gave her her signature look that said, _"Just drop it. I'm not _dying_."_

Cleo sighed. "If you say so." Deciding to let the matter slide, she turned the doorknob to Emma's house and stepped into the threshold.

Rikki shut the door behind her. "So are we gonna get this party started or what?" she called to the room at large. A roll of black duct tape flew at her from the corner of her eye and she caught it hurriedly.

"Depends," said the voice of Emma quizzically. "If your definition of a party is putting yourself on house arrest once a month or else all sanity breaks loose, then yes; it's a party."

Grinning at the remark, Cleo and Emma descended the two steps from the entryway and wandered into the kitchen to where Emma had climbed onto the counter and was securing a last slab of cardboard onto the windows with another roll of said duct tape, effectively blocking all sources of light from the outside. She slid down and stepped back to examine her handy work.

"I think you missed a spot there, Em," Rikki joked, receiving a look from the other blonde.

"Well you're more than welcome to fix it yourself."

She tilted her head. "On second thought, great job."

"That's what I thought."

Finding a comfortable spot on the lush couch, Cleo rolled her eyes and started picking through the pile of magazines on the coffee table in front of her. "So where have your parents gone off to?" she asked.

"Another crystal wear convention," Emma replied evenly, then looked sidelong at Rikki, who just so happened to have done the same thing. After a moment of tension, Rikki snorted and rolled her eyes to the ceiling.

"If you even think of going rebel again, I swear to God Almighty I'll catch your hair on fire." Emma glared at her.

"You wouldn't."

"Oh, but I would." The two laughed subtly in remembrance of the heated conflict between them. While Emma's parents might've somewhat thought of their daughter being a rebel, it sure as heck didn't fool Rikki, who knew that Emma was anything but.

"Well, there was that one time you offered to take out Miriam and Zane when they crashed Em's sleepover that one time," Cleo told her, and Rikki shrugged nonchalantly.

"And who's to say I wouldn't have been capable of such a selfless deed?" she replied dramatically.

"Everybody." Rikki raised an amused eyebrow at Emma, but before she could spit out a carefully orchestrated and witty comeback, the doorbell rang and echoed through the otherwise empty house. "I'll get it," Cleo said quickly, throwing down her magazine of choice and making a beeline for the door before she could end up in the middle of the headstrong pair; where she often found herself. But before she could even reach fully for the knob, the door opened and the newcomer walked in. Only, newcomer wasn't the right word...

"Lewis!" Cleo sounded surprised, but she really wasn't. It was only natural Lewis would drop in to "watch over them" for the night, even though they were completely capable of taking care of themselves.

Lewis waved once. "Hey, guys," he greeted, fumbling awkwardly with both a large telescope and his white laptop in one arm. Emma glanced up at him. "What are you doing here?"

"Oh, you know me; I love a good party."

"And I love having you around to tell me a bunch of random facts while secretly I ignore you and don't take in a single word you say," Rikki sang. "Now that I've told the truth, your turn, Lewis."

"Well, I'd just thought I'd come make sure you guys were alrightâ€"

"Which we are," Emma stated impatiently.

"â€"and I also wanted to do some research on the planetary alignments while I was here. You know, gather some data. I brought my telescopeâ€" " he jerked his head in the direction of the large cylindrical object under his arm, "â€"and figured I could set up outside. That way, I'll be right outside if you guys need meâ€" "

"Which we won't," Rikki added.

Lewis merely nodded meekly, but Cleo interjected. "Well, better safe than sorry. Right, guys?"

This was met with a mumbled chorus of "Uh huh," and "Yeah, I s'pose."

"Great," Lewis said cheerfully. "Remember that preparation is nine-tenths of the battle. This way we'll be ready for anything."

Rikki looked up at him in mock surprise. "Anything? Wow, and here I was all worried about the year 2012. That's a relief, yeah?"

"Well aren't you full of it today," Emma remarked. Rikki shrugged.

"I have my days." Cleo glanced at her in an all-knowing sort of way, but Rikki's pointed look told her to keep quiet. After all, it was just a headache.

Wasn't it?

Yeah, nothing to worry about.

* * *

><p>To be continued...

****Well, if you missed the major foreshadowing attempt, you're obviously blind or naive; one of the two. So I didn't particularly get anywhere with this chapter, but wanted to throw in some jokes and whatnot before the main plot starts to pick up, which should be next chapter. So look forward to it!****

****Alsoâ€"as many of us know and dreadâ€"school is going to be**

starting up again soon (approximately August 22nd for me), so between homework and studying, I might not have as much time to work on my stories as I had this summer vacation, but I'll still try my hardest to update as frequently as possible. I won't let you guys down!**

Thanks so much to everyone who took the time to review! It really means a lot to me. It's because of awesome people like you guys that I'm motivated to continue writing for both your and my enjoyment.

**Question for readers: Should I add more or less detail? Or is the amount I'm currently producing just right? ****I feel like I need a second opinion on this, and I'd appreciate if you'd help me out. CURSE MY SELF-CONSCIOUS SELF! *shakes fist angrily at the ceiling***

Thanks for reading and feel free to review! ^_^

3. A Turn of Events

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Chapter 3

"A Turn of Events"*

RIKKI

"Okay, guys. Full moon officially up in three...two...one," Lewis announced while keeping time on his watch and super scientifically-advanced laptop. That boy had so many science programs installed on that thing it wouldn't surprise me if it figured out a way to grow legs and walk away. Well, there's a funny picture. Seriously, though. Even if my Algebra teacher saw so many numbers and charts, she'd run for the hills. God only knows she has to deal with drama-attracting, unruly high school teenagers all the time. Wouldn't surprise me if she suddenly decided to take a paid vacation.

Now if you've never been around to witness a full moon rising, you're not missing out. It's like the countdown to New Years', only it happens every twenty-eight days and once the clock strikes, there's no confetti, no fireworks, or kissing the first guy or girl you see next to you, as creepy and desperate as that is in the first place. And considering Lewis is the only guy in the room...ugh. Of course, let's hope Zane will be the one next to me when that happens. Okay,

focus Rikki. He's not coming back till Monday. No point getting butterflies in your stomach just yet... Okay, that's better.

Anyway, life continues as it normally had since Cleo and I'd arrived; Emma and Cleo debating over which movie to watch, neither of the titles particularly registering in my mind as I absentmindedly flipped through some random magazine, none of the pictures or words jumping out as interesting enough for me to actually stop and give it a once-over. So I was basically staring into space while my hand moved on its own accord through the thin, glossy printed pages. Yup, that's me! Rikki the Bookworm all the way. Sarcasm implied, in case you didn't catch it the first time.

Lewis continued typing away on his laptop. I didn't normally find the subdued clicking and tapping an annoyance, but for some reason the noise seemed to linger in the air and echo in my eardrums once before fading away, only to repeat itself again. After all, typing on a keyboard required rapid succession of keys.

Whatever. I chose to ignore it to the best of my ability, as I often did most things Lewis-related.

Don't get me wrong; I totally consider Lewis a really good and close friend and everything, but sometimes his scientific side gets the better of him and he can tend to be a little... suffocating. While it's cool to try and view our whole mermaid metamorphosis thing as a scientific breakthrough, I still wanted to believe that there was magic to the whole thing. Yeah, I know what you're thinking: Magic? I read about that when I was five. Well, once you grow an orange tail, let me know what you think then.

"Okay, Rikki, you're the tiebreaker," Emma voice echoed in my head, bringing me back to this crazy thing called reality. "Which one?" Out of the corner of my eye I saw her hold up two rectangular movie cases.

"Erm... one on the right," I replied groggily and completely at random.

"You didn't even look!" she accused. Totally true, but I didn't say so.

"Um...flip a coin?" I offered, leaning my head against my arm. "I don't know, they both sound good to me." I didn't even know what the options were, but knowing Emma and Cleo's tastes, I figured I trusted them enough as unpaid movie critics.

"Say, are you feeling okay?" Cleo asked suddenly. "You look a little pale." I mentally chastised her for bringing that up again, but really I was only cursing my own head for betraying me. I could probably wiggle my way out of her Mother Hen act for now, before everyone got concerned over nothing. After all, stretching the truth was one of the things I was best at. Well, that and lightening the mood. Both could come in pretty handy at a time like this.

I snorted in reply to Cleo's comment. "You mean paler than usual?"

Emma laughed. "She's got you there, Cleo." I narrowed my eyes at her, but plastered on a grin anyway. There was no doubt in my mind that if

Emma found out I'd been going through the day feeling like I'd been hit by a freaking _speedboat_, she'd flip and go put on a nurse's hat or something. There was really no surefire guesses when it came to any of the Gilberts. They were as predictable as... well, our lives.

"You guys really should see thisâ€"it's incredible!" Lewis called from the kitchen counter, where he'd set up his little NASA headquarters or something close to. "The calculations in the diameter ofâ€"

"Lewis," I said slowly. "Remember what we talked about earlier; _English_ is a key language in this country. Practicing it from time to time might do you some good. You know, help you fit into society and all that jazz." I didn't even need to turn around to know that his face had just flushed an embarrassed shade of red behind the telescope lens.

"I'll keep it in mind," he grumbled. I merely shook my head in an amused fashion, but stopped when the movement further intensified the pounding going around in my skull. The room seemed to tilt for a second, then leveled out once more.

It was nothing, though. A good night's sleep and I'll be ready to swim around the world in eighty days... or however long the hell it would take. Beats me. Weakness was definitely one of the things I did not enjoy showing to other people, even if those people happen to be Cleo and Emma. I hate the insecure feeling whenever I let people inâ€"and it annoys me to no end because no matter how hard I dislike it, I can never fully change it. Far easier to simply cover it up and leave it buried.

Just another one of my personal migraines, I guess.

"Maybe you should take a break, Lewis," Cleo advised. "I think all those numbers are getting to your head." Lewis didn't have to think about his decision for too long, a couple seconds max, before closing out his windows and claiming the seat next to Cleo. Ha, I knew he couldn't refuse an offer from his girlfriend. Sure, they'd been on and off a couple times thanks to Charlotte, but it was short lived. Anyone could tell they were close friends. Like, _really_ close. Guess having a long history helps the relationship along, huh.

I wonder... Is there a history with me and Zane?

Let's see; I messed with his boat, we both couldn't stand to be within a close proximity of each other, he drove me up the wall for the longest time while he hunted mermaids, then helped us escape from Denman (which was his fault in the first place, might I add), and things kind of blurred from there... Hmm. Not exactly your average material for a romance novel. Heck, it's not even _Titanic_ materialâ€"the boat was already kind of sunk at the beginning. More like we started at the beginning of the movie and rewound it chapter by chapter.

Of course, we did have a bunch of good times, too. There's no doubt about that. I don't know, maybe it was fate or something. I didn't exactly know what fate was anymore. Had becoming a mermaid been some kind of fate? Or just a coincidental event?

Ugh, all this thinking's making my head hurt even worse! Point being, it was the best thing to happen to any of us; doesn't matter how it happened, it just did. And Zane and I are good together; I make him happy, he makes me happy. We get each other. 'Nuff said.

"Aw, what kind of chick-flick is this?" Lewis grumbled. I still didn't know what Emma had ended up picking, but if it was to Lewis's disliking, that was fine by me.

"It's a romantic comedy, not a 'click-flick,'" Cleo said in an all-knowing sort of way that almost made me laugh out loud. But I don't think my head would've agreed with that decision. As Emma went over and dimmed the lights slightly, a sudden drowsiness took over. I leaned my head back and closed my eyes for a second.

* * *

><p>When I opened them again, it had seemed like only a couple of seconds had passed, but I had absolutely no way of knowing. I mentally panicked for a moment. Had I fallen asleep? I usually don't go to bed this early. The others had their eyes glued to the television screen still, so I figured nobody had noticed; sometime along the way Lewis had abandoned the "chick-flick" and had gone back to his laptop. I couldn't tell what time it was. The lights were still on. I can't tell what time it is when I sleep with the lights on.

I checked my watch instead. Okay, so it had only been a couple of minutes, five at best. So why did I feel like I could sleep for a year?

There had been a dull migraine formulating against the back of my head for hours now; but as time gradually progressed, it persisted, and in fact, it had only gotten worse, hitting its peak at the approximate one hour mark after the moon had risen.

"Rikki, are you okay?" Cleo again.

I'd been doing pretty well in hiding my growing discomfort thus far, and don't get me wrong, my threshold for pain tolerance was quite high, especially at this stage of the game. I opened my mouth, fully intending to answer her, but suddenly, out of absolutely nowhere, there was a flash of white-hot pain that flashed across my skull as my senses slowly began to shut off and nothing but blackness swarmed in front of my eyes even though they both remained firmly open.

I had turned off all my connections with the outside world in an instant of time that had passed by so quickly, I almost missed it... and even though I wasn't exactly sure what had just happened to me, or for how long it lasted, I knew that judging by the looks on Cleo and Emma's faces when I started coming to again, I was starting to get the notion that it must have been pretty severe...

"Rikki?" My eyes first started focusing on basic blurry shapes and a few indistinct colors as my ears started recognizing only the dimmest of sounds once again... The first cognitive observation that I'd actually been able to piece inside of my mind was the fact that Cleo was calling out my name, begging my eyes to focus on her own as Emma exchanged alarmed looks from Cleo to me and back again before she started yelling something I still couldn't hear.

"Rikki look at me... can you hear me? Rikki!" Her voice sounded terribly panicked; shaking and rising in volume and inclination as she attempted to force me back into a state of attention by grasping onto my shoulders and shaking my body harshly so that I could literally feel my head rattling around inside of my skull.

"Cleo... Cleo stop, I'm okay, I'm okay." I pushed my body forcefully out of her grasp because I was terrified that if she kept shaking me at the rate she was, I would physically pass out from a combination of the extent of dizziness that I was currently feeling alongside the brutal pain in my head.

"What happened?" Cleo's response was intercepted by Lewis as he came scrambling into my room in response to Emma's persistence in calling out to him.

"There's something wrong." Emma broke her own analysis of the situation between Lewis's question and my own response before I could so much as open my damn mouth. "She just... I don't know... she kind of passed out... no, that's not right... she went sort of catatonic or something for a minute or so and then she was just... fine."

I continued to cradle my aching head between my two hands, still in too much pain to argue that I was just fine. I don't ever remember feeling this slammed around before. Well, there was that one time with that Tibetan statue crate, but that seemed minor in comparison.

"Okay, Rikki... what's going on?" His words pierced my skull, magnified tenfold as he shone a light directly into my eyes, trying to check the reactions of my pupils... but he might as well have been stabbing daggers directly through my brain or something the amount of pain it caused me...

"I don't know," I muttered, tears of pain stinging harshly across the back of my voice. "I've had this headache... all day long and it just suddenly got... it got really bad..."

Emma's eyebrows furrowed in the middle as she looked sternly at me. Oh man, here we go! "And you didn't tell anyone?" There was a hint of concern in her voice. I felt stupid now. Stupid and like I'd gotten slammed through a brick wall. Or maybe the brick wall part was due to the whole stupidity thing. I didn't really know anymore.

Cleo bit her lip. "Well, she mentioned it earlier, but said it was nothing, so Iâ€"

"It's not your fault, Cleo," I told her, rather breathlessly. I didn't want her blaming herself for something that was entirely out of their hands. "I blew it off. I mean, it didn't seem... at the time... I just... I don't know." Everything was dancing in and out of focus. The room suddenly became uncomfortably warm, like a car heater turned all the way up, and I could feel sweat begin to dampen my neck and hairline.

"Come on, you should lie down," Emma advised and grabbed my wrist to help pull me to my feet. But as soon as our skin made contact, she jerked back like she'd been shocked. "You're burning up!" she exclaimed, then felt the need to elaborate further. "I mean, you're

literally burning up." I didn't mention that to me, her hand felt like ice. I didn't know if it were because of the temperature difference or not.

Crap. I vaguely remember an incident similar to this one... It was the first time I'd been moonstruck, and I lost the ability over my powers. I knew my power was the most dangerous out of all of ours, and I didn't want to hurt anybody again. Especially not now. Damn it all!

The three of them exchanged nervous glances. Cleo was the one to break the silence. "Rikki, you didn't happen to get a peek at the moon, did you?"

I shook my head, but immediately regretted it a second later. I grimaced. "No, Cleo, I didn't see the moon." At least, I was half sure of everything at this point. I was pretty sure I didn't. Had I? No. Definitely not. If I had, I wouldn't even have a vague idea of who or where I was until the moon sets.

"You're sure?" Emma asked. She paused for a second. "Who's the owner of Juicenet?"

What? A freaking quiz at a time like this? Did she think I was some kind of impostor or something? You've got to be kidding. "Emma, I really don't thinkâ€"

"Just answer the question!" she commanded, not caring if the noise almost knocked me out again. I sighed loudly out of both annoyance and discomfort. "Wilfred; middle-aged, tall, dark complexion, used to wear that totally unflattering flower-print t-shirtâ€"

"Okay, okay, you're not moonstruck."

"Little slow today, Em?" I dished out the average everyday Rikki Chadwick sarcasm in an attempt to get Emma to relax a little. I felt bad; I knew that she was probably a nervous wreck right about now, and I couldn't blame her much. I've never done anything for Emma other than raise her blood pressure a couple of notches; Don't say it, I feel bad enough as it is.

In the end, I ended up on the couchâ€"where I had initially started before somehow ending up on the floor. The ceiling started spinning, so I screwed my eye shut, trying to ease the pain resonating from my very brain as I picked up bits and pieces of a conversation. Lewis kept talking on and on, but I couldn't adjust my mind to what he was saying, couldn't understand it at all. It was like stepping from solid ground onto a roller coaster, and while I was still puzzling over one thing, he had gone on to something else.

Every sound became muffled, like it was coming from a million miles away. For some reason or other, that disconnected feeling made me feel alone, more alone than I had ever been. It was like being in a glass bubble and watching the world from it. I wanted to get rid of the feeling.

I moved my head, attempting to find a more comfortable position that would magically cure my head trauma, and the pain knocked me out.

The last thing I heard was my name.

* * *

><p>To be continued...

****End of chapter three! Whew, I worked hard on this, and there's going to be a lot more to come. My goal is to make this story ongoing for some time, and I have plenty of good ideas to keep the story interesting.****

****Thanks so much for all the reviews I've gotten. It means a lot to me. Your advice and encouraging words make my day! ^_^****

Question for readers: Do you prefer reading in the third-person perspective or first-person point of view? Let me know on my profile poll or via review! Any and all feedback is greatly appreciated and will help me make decisions when writing for your enjoyment!****

*******So it seems Rikki's headache has turned into something more severe. Will she be okay? What obstacles of the night will the others encounter? Why am I asking _you_ all of these questions? Be sure to check out chapter four (currently in the works).*******

******Too long? Too short? I accept ANY constructive criticism or ideas that you would like to see later on. All reviews are welcome!******

4. Through Still and Storm part 1

****I do not own H2O: Just Add Waterâ€”**_**that **_**is rightfully owned by Viacom. **_**I**_**, however, own the storyline. Because if I **_**did**_** own H2O: Just Add Water, I probably wouldn't be sitting here at my computer writing this, now would I? ;-)****

* * *

><p>Summary: When a rare full moon takes a dramatic turn, causing the girls' powers to go haywire, can they make it through the night with friendship prevailing? Or will things take a turn for the worse?

Author's note: Takes place post season two. Season three has not occurred yet.

****Chapter 4****

****"Through Still and Storm (Part 1)"****

****EMMA****

I could only watch as Rikki's head lolled to the side and her body went limp. I'd only ever seen her unconscious like this once before, and admittedly, it had scared me. Not knowing whether or not or when she was going to wake up again... I can't quite describe it. And I don't want to wish that feeling on anybody. Sure, I had felt angry and lied to that same day, but I would never intentionally wish harm on one of my friends or family members. It's almost funny how quickly

the table of emotions can turn, isn't it?

And here we were again, having another freak incident with the moon. I thought we were over that, but apparently I was wrong.

"Rikki? Rikki!" I called out to her. I extended my arm, intending to put it on her shoulder to try and shake her body and mind back into consciousness, but stopped a couple inches away when I thought better of it. Heat was radiating from her body like an oven, and I could practically feel my skin sizzle in response.

Okay, so fire and ice... bad combination. It's not exactly rocket scienceâ€"that was more Lewis's thing.

Cleo was frantic, pacing back and forth with such intensity I was half expecting her to drill a moat into the carpet. "We...we have to do something," she was saying quickly, "cool her down somehow, get her to wake upâ€"

"No," Lewis interrupted, causing Cleo to skid to a stop. "When a person sleeps, their primary functions and heart rate slow down and their overall body temperature cools down a little. If anything, this is helping the situation."

"But Lewis," I snapped, surprising even myself with the strain in my voice, "she isn't sleepingâ€"she's unconscious, for Pete's sake!" Who the heck this Pete guy is, I could care less. We didn't have time to sit around debating the matter. We needed to do something, anything. And then a thought struck me.

"The moon pool," I muttered, more to myself than to the others. I turned to Cleo, who was looking at me like I had two heads and a carrot for a nose. "The moon poolâ€"it's always solved all of our mermaid fiascoes in the past. What if we go there?"

Lewis had jumped to his feet before I'd even finished. "No way, absolutely not. It's too dangerous."

"Well in case you haven't noticed, danger is something we've become rather familiar with over the years," Cleo said truthfully, her right hand unconsciously fingering the locket around her neck, around all our necks. She resumed pacing; I was tempted to join in just watching her. "Look, whatever is going on, it's obviously out of our control. Maybe what you said about Neptune and Mercury aligning is coming trueâ€" Lewis opened his mouth to retort, but Cleo had only paused briefly, "â€"and this is just our... catastrophic way of knowing." As she finished she glanced at Rikki, whose face was already beginning to flush red despite going pale.

I pulled the sleeves of my jacket down over my hands. The room suddenly felt cooler than it had a second ago. Maybe because I was now a good couple feet from the now-scorching Rikki. I felt bad that I wasn't at her side, like a good friend is supposed to do, but what could I do? I wasn't too keen on the idea of getting burned. Been there, done that.

"Look guys, I get where you're coming from, I really do. But we can't risk either of you being effected, too." Lewis sighed, abandoning his laptop and coming over to pull Cleo into what I guessed was supposed to be a supportive, one-armed hug. "The best thing I can think of is

to just wait it out until morning."

Cleo and I exchanged glances before we both simultaneously deflated. "I suppose you're right," I said. "I can't think of any other alternative. Can you?"

Cleo shook her head silently. Lewis saw our reaction and tried once more to offer some sort of encouraging support. "I wouldn't worry too much, guys. This has happened before. I'm sure it'll all blow off by morning. If it makes you feel any better, I'll monitor her temperature and make sure she doesn't get any worse for the wear. Okay?"

"Sounds like a plan to me," Cleo sighed unhappily. I could tell she was still pretty shaken, so I put my hands on her shoulders and gave her what I thought was a reassuring smile. "Come on, Cleo, this is _Rikki_ we're talking about here. You know how stubborn she isâ€"way too stubborn to let a silly full moon get the upper hand." It appeared my words had some effect.

"Yeah, you're probably right, Em."

I gave a humble shrug. "Aren't I always?"

* * *

><p>Twenty-five point six degrees Celsius[1], I read for the third time that night.

Rubbing my upper arms with my hands, I felt the minuscule warmth provided by the friction; but as soon as I seized the movement, my skin reclaimed its chilly feeling, despite the room temperature being rather comfortable. Zipping up my jacket to my neck, I stepped away from the thermostat and sat down next to Cleo.

"Em?"

"Hmm?"

"You okay?" I sensed the genuine concern in her tone of voice.

"Yeah, as I'll ever be in a situation like this. Why?"

"You seem... edgy." I turned to look at Cleo.

"Well, why shouldn't I be? Rikki's, well... _out of it._" Worry must have been writing all over my face, because Cleo's facial expression, already a recipe of worry and concern, added a mixture of sympathy.

"Yeah, no kidding." Cleo propped her elbow on her knee and put her head in her hand. "We're all worried, but I have the feeling we'll get through thisâ€"together. Just like with everything else that happens that happens in our crazy, half-normal, half-mermaid lives." As she finished, she smiled subtly. I unconsciously mirrored the action.

"Thanks, Cleo."

She reached around to pull me into a hug, but suddenly broke away in confusion. "Geez, Em, have you gone swimming in Antarctica?"

I felt a frown crease my forehead as a thread of uncertainty wormed its way into my stomach. "What d'you mean?"

"What I _mean _is that you're freezing. I can feel the cold through your clothes."

My mind attempted to spit out a plausible explanation for this sudden dilemma. "But it's not me, right? It must be cold in here or something. Don't _you_ think it's cold?" I asked her quickly, hoping she'd agree with me. After all, it couldn't just be me, could it?

"Actually, Emma," Lewis chimed in from nowhere, "If anything, it's a little warm. Chances are... it's..." Realization dawned on his face. He froze uncertainly, one foot hovering in midair. His eyes had even drifted out of focus. "It's you," he concluded slowly, his eyes boring into mine.

That small thread of uncertainly had grown into a thick ribbon. I swallowed. "You mean...?" I didn't feel the need to finish that sentence, and let it hang in the air. It couldn't be...

Cleo simply sat, looking both a little lost and alarmed. Lewis nodded hesitantly. "It's not just Rikki that's effected...it's also you, Emma." He took a breath, like he was trying to break the news to me gently. Well, too late, I was already falling. "Your mermaid powers are going haywire on you as well."

A moment of silence greeted these words. Thoughts, questions, theories, and everything in between swirled around in jumbled pairs through my head. I wondered if this was how Rikki felt earlier.

"So what do we do?" I found myself saying.

Cleo took a breath. "Wait it out, just like we decided before."

* * *

><p>"Cleo, are you scared?"<p>

Cleo frowned at me from across the room. Yup, that's right, you heard me correctlyâ€_across _the room. With my skin suddenly turning more and more into an icicle as the minutes ticked by with each swing of the pendulum, I had decided to migrate to the opposite side of the room from Cleo, Lewis and the still unresponsive Rikki, not wanting to force them into wearing winters jackets on the Gold Coast in the middle of spring.

"Well, I don't know. I mean, if something's happened to you two, something's bound to happen to me, too," Cleo said. I wanted to tell her that that wouldn't happen, but she was already talking again. "But whatever it is, I can handle it."

"You're not alone, you know." Lewis sat next to her and held her hand. "I'll be right here. I'll make sure nothing bad happens."

Cleo smiled. "I know. I'm just glad we're all in one place."

"You mean 'one piece?'" I paced back and forth, jumped up and down, did random stretches I still remember from swim team practices, trying anything to get warm. Or at least keep the cold at bay. I felt like I would start shivering or my teeth would resume chattering if I stopped. Okay, so I hadn't done this the full two hours since my powers had flipped out, but it helped. What worried me more was that Rikki still hadn't woken up or done even so much as stir in that time.

One thing I was certain of though—"Rikki was definitely more affected than us two. If she'd been experiencing that headache of hers since this morning, that should've been a heads-up or a foreshadowing for what was going to happen; we had just not realized it at the time.

Come to think of it, Rikki was just overall more greatly affected when it came to the full moon. A similar incident came to mind.

"We just need to keep a positive frame of mind," Cleo continued.

"Easier said than done," I muttered. That statement totally contradicted what Cleo had just said, but it was how I felt. And more importantly, it was completely true.

"What time did you say the moon was supposed to set?" Cleo directed the question at Lewis, who glanced at his laptop.

"Seven fifty-two."

"Brilliant, so only about twelve more hours of this to go," I groaned sarcastically. Normally (and naturally) that was Rikki's specialty, but I felt like I needed to fill in for our comic relief. I wasn't as good at it, but A for effort, right?

Maybe it was this small thought that made me glance over at her once more, and when I saw that her eyes had finally decided to open and were currently examining the ceiling, I forgot all about the cold—it just up and vanished.

"You're awake!" I exclaimed. Cleo and Lewis, having not noticed the same time I did, snapped their attention over to the far side of the room, where Rikki was slowly and groggily sitting up. Feeling brave, I went over and sat down next to her. Immediately afterwards, warmth, like a hot furnace or a car heater, hit me head-on. It was almost suffocating at first, but after the first couple of seconds, it felt...good.

Wow. Why hadn't I thought of this before? Way to go, Emma. Undoubtedly, this whole moon ordeal was screwing with my sense of judgment and _common sense_. Freezing cold + blazing heat = balance... I think. Whatever, close enough.

"How do you feel?"

Rikki rubbed her temples and closed her eyes briefly before opening them again. "Dunno," she croaked out, leaning her head on her arm without shifting her eyes. She wasn't looking at me though.

"How many fingers?" Cleo asked, holding up two of them. Still, Rikki didn't direct her gaze to them. "Can't see too clearly for some reason," she murmured disconnectedly, frowning at the difficulty of it all. We all exchanged cautious glances. It hadn't gotten that serious, had it?

Lewis spoke. "What's my name?" he asked her. I wanted to tell him that the answer to such a question was obvious, but I caught the gist of what he was trying to test and didn't say anythingâ€”simply waited for Rikki's response.

There was a large gap of silence between the question and answer, though. Maybe that's when I began to realize something wasn't quite right.

"Um, Rikki?" I waved my fingers in front of her face experimentally. She didn't blink. So I tried snapping. Still nothing.

Out of nowhere, Rikki smiled giddily. "It's nice," she said dreamily. "I like this, I like the water."

"Um, there isn't any water, Rikki," Cleo informed her, looking and sounding just as confused as I was. "Rikki, you're scaring us."

"Oh, _no_."

I looked at Lewis. "What? What is it?"

His gaze snapped to mine. The next words he said confirmed what I'd been thinking. And it scared the heck out of me.

"Her body temperature is too hot. At 40 degrees_[2]_...that means..._she's beginning to hallucinate."_

* * *

><p>[1] = 78 degrees Fahrenheit

[2] = 104 degrees Fahrenheit

Okay, since H2O: Just Add Water is an Australian television program, I decided to use their form of temperature readings (a.k.a. Celsius), instead of the American use of Fahrenheit. Either way, I converted it for you so that way nobody is confused or forced to Google it. You're welcome! ^_^

OH GOSH! ANOTHER PLOT TWIST! I SURE DIDN'T SEE THIS COMING! (Total lie; I planned it from the beginning.) Will Rikki be okay? Will Emma be able to help somehow? Will Cleo end up being affected as well?

**Find out in chapter five!**

**Coming soon to a computer screen near you...**

**Question for readers: Who is ****your **_**favorite H2O character? Let me know via review or private message!**_

Reviews? Comments? Questions? Concerns? Fire away!

****Thanks for reading!****

5. Through Still and Storm part 2

****I do not own H2O: Just Add Waterâ€™**_**that **_**is rightfully owned by Viacom. **_**I**_**, however, own the storyline. Because if I **_**did**_** own H2O: Just Add Water, I probably wouldn't be sitting here at my computer writing this, now would I? ;-)****

*** * ***

><p>Summary: When a rare full moon takes a dramatic turn, causing the girls' powers to go haywire, can they make it through the night with friendship prevailing? Or will things take a turn for the worse?

Author's note: Takes place post season two. Season three has not occurred yet.

****Chapter 5****

****"Through Still and Storm (Part 2)"****

****EMMA****

I'd only ever read about certain hallucinations that were a result of dehydration and the like, usually involving some miraculous story of survival in the Outbacks or somewhere similar, but this was the first time I'd heard of fever being a cause. Although if Lewis knew about it, it couldn't be unnaturally uncommon. As unnatural as say, a mermaid.

A deafening silence settled over the room. And we thought this night couldn't possible get any worse...

"Try talking to her, spark her memory or something, get her to snap out of it," Lewis suggested. Seemed like a good enough option to me. Or rather, the only option.

"Rikki?" I began tentatively, "It's Emma." So when in doubt, start back at square one.

Rikki frowned. "Emma..." she repeated slowly, as if speaking the name for the first time, which was definitely not the case.

"You're hallucinating," Cleo told her, "You need to snap out of it."

"Why would I do that?" Rikki asked loosely. She had on an expressionless face, a description rarely seen in her. She stared at Lewis till the poor guy wiggled. Rikki wasn't seeing him, though. She was seeing things other people couldn't see, and laughing when nothing was funny. Her sky blue eyes were cloudy and unfocusedâ€™they reminded me of a two-way mirror. Like you could feel somebody on the other side watching you, but the only reflection you saw was your own.

"Because you're scaring us," I said. Not a lie.

This seemed to surprise her. "Really? How so?" Her gaze further arose our suspicions as she suddenly tilted her head further to the right.

"Rikki? What are you looking at...?" Lewis asked after a pause.

"I...I'm not sure," replied Rikki. However, there was something in her tone that caused me to grow even more concerned. Whatever she was seeingâ€"I did not know what it was, but it worried me. Maybe it was the way the heat seemed even more intense than before, but after a moment I felt my skin becoming less cold. It was like we were becoming our elements. Physically, at least.

I was still worried about Cleo. If this was what was happening to us two, I sure didn't want her turning into water on us... or something.

"Well this is just hunky-dory," sighed a flustered Lewis as he ran a hand through his blonde locks.

"What do we do?" asked Cleo, twirling a strand of hair around her fingers in anxiety. I could practically hear the gears grinding together in Lewis's head, formulating and calculating.

"Well, I have a theory. Or it's more like common sense, or ratherâ€" "

"Get to the point," I urged impatiently.

Lewis stopped rambling. "Emma, you're cold, and Rikki's hot. If you two could somehow balance each other's symptoms out..." He didn't need to finish. The message clicked on its own.

"Makes sense," Cleo quipped.

I took a breath. "Alright. Whatever it takes."

* * *

><p>"Well, it's a good thing your parents aren't around to witness this fiasco. Goodness knows it'll be hard to explain this one," Lewis commented in an attempt to lighten the mood.

"Tell me about it," I agreed. "My mom would flip her lid. She'd probably go get that doctor who's such an expert on rare tropical diseases." Cleo rolled her eyes in amusement.

"Must be nice..."

I raised an eyebrow at Rikki. "What? The water again?" Might as well poke a little fun at her, or store what she'd said during her trip to La-La-Land away for future reference, just in case I needed to counter one of her daily jokes with one of my own.

But she shook her head. "No... to have a mom around." She paused and looked up in thought as if she could see all of the answers written on the ceiling. "Haven't seen her in awhile...I wonder what she's up to these days..."

I immediately felt sorry for her...and a tad bit curious. This was one of the very first times I've heard Rikki mention her mom to anyone. I'd come to the conclusion that it was a sore topic and didn't question her further. Even if I did, I knew she'd find some way to dodge it.

"You were right," Rikki said out of the clear blue sky.

I turned and looked at her, trying to figure out what she meant. She didn't seem to see me watching her. The past hour she had been completely zoned out, just sat and stared and stayed quiet. I wasn't used to a quiet Rikki—it was completely out of tune with her usual personality. I had to check a couple times to make sure she was still breathing, for crying out loud.

"What do you mean? About what?" This sudden statement got me interested in what was going through that delusional mind of hers.

She suddenly seemed sad, almost depressed about something.
"_Everything_" she murmured.

I could only stare.

Don't get me wrong, I usually like being told I'm always right, but even I know I can be wrong sometimes or more often than not. It's what makes us human. At this point in the game, I was surprised the couch we were sitting on hadn't caught fire yet, if that little piece of information tells you anything. But at least Rikki was talking again. I had to keep her talking.

"_Nah_, I don't think I'm right about _everything_" I said, trying to make my voice as casually normal and carefree sounding as possible. It must not have sounded as convincing as it did in my head.

"I'm not very funny, aren't I?"

The room seemed cooler for some reason after she said that, and I had a feeling it had nothing to do with my powers freaking out on me. Those words seemed oddly familiar...

And then it hit me like a ton of bricks.

_I'd _been the one to tell her that, way back when I barely even knew her name, after the whole Mako incident that got us to where we are today. I suddenly regretted saying it.

"No, no, you, erm—"

"_Don't lie to me, Em._"

Well, I suppose water and words are both easy to pour but impossible to recover.

Rikki suddenly laughed. The switch seemed so rapid—one minute she looked like her dog had just died and the next, here she was, laughing. Part of me wanted to laugh at the sheer ridiculousness of the fact, and the other part of me was scared for my friend. The clash between our overall body temperatures was helping balance it

out, but for some reason Rikki was still hallucinating.

"Sometimes I still wonder..." She trailed off, letting the sentence hang in the air. I decided to take hold of it.

"Wonder what?" Just keep her talking. Just keep her talking.

And then the faint light that had entered her eyes left just as quickly. "Why you guys even offered me your friendship in the first place."

Her voice didn't waver, her monotone voice didn't change, and the same could be said about everything else in Rikki Chadwick at that moment. Personally, I was taken aback at the statement and Cleo—who had tuned into the conversation from across the room where she was currently resting her head in the crook of Lewis's neck—seemed likewise. She sat up.

"Why do you think that?" she asked in disbelief.

To my surprise, Rikki's eyes shifted to look at her. They were hard and vulnerable at the same time. "Because if it weren't for the fact we're mermaids, you wouldn't have given me a second thought."

Our jaws had might as well have hit our kneecaps. Man, was this girl D-E-L-U-S-I-O-N-A-L.

"Rikki, how can you even _think _that?"

"Because it was my fault in the first place," she muttered so quietly I strained to hear the words. I couldn't sit right next to her and listen to her disgrace herself, no matter how unscrewed her head was tonight. I grabbed her shoulders, forcing her to look at me. My hands stung for a moment under the direct contact. It was almost like sticking your hand over a hot stove. But at the same time I felt relief.

"Rikki, your head must seriously be messed up up there if you honestly believe that."

I expected some sort of reaction, but what I wasn't expecting was for her eyes to widen and for her to suddenly jerk away. "Jeez, Emma, you're freezing! What'd you do, jump in the freezer?"

I wanted to say yes, I'd might as well have, but instead I found my attention renewed as I sized her up and down. "You know who I am?" Dumb question? Maybe. But tonight it seemed more vital than ever.

Rikki looked confused. "_Yes," _she said slowly, drawing out the S. "What game are we playing exactly? 20 Questions, the Obvious Edition?"

Any amount of sarcasm, no matter how offensive or witty, sent a wave of relief into me. I heard Cleo sigh in relief as well. "Thank Goodness," I breathed, pulling her in for a hug.

"What's exactly going on?" Rikki asked, pulling away quickly. Her eyes still held a somewhat glossy look. Apparently she still hadn't fully recovered. But she was becoming more lucid, which was good,

although she kept periodically squinting as if she were trying to force her eyes to focus. My skin seemed slightly warmer than it had been earlier. Maybe our polar opposites worked out for the better, just like we'd hoped it would.

Lewis jumped in for explanation. "Your powers are running high, causing your body temperature to increase so much that you started hallucinating. Emma is having the same effect, but opposite, and Cleo... well, fortunately nothing yet." He wrapped his arm around Cleo as he finished.

Rikki's brows furrowed further in confusion. "Hallucinations? What kinds of hallucinations?"

"You just said some things, that's all," Cleo answered. "You had us really worried." Cleo flashed a relieved smile, but Rikki didn't return the gesture.

"Okay, well, sorry for making you worry, I guess. I can't really remember anything since... you know." Rikki paused briefly. "What sort of things did I end up rambling about?" she asked, groaning, seemingly afraid of the answer.

"Nothing in particular," I said. "Just about the water and those kinds of things." I might have been speaking a little too fast for it to be believable, but Rikki—who was still a little out of it—seemed to buy it.

"Oh." She rolled her eyes. "Guess I won't be hearing the end of this one, huh."

"On occasion, yes," I joked, resuming rubbing my hands together. Rikki shot me an amused look, but seemed too tired to try and counter the remark with one of her own. Instead she rubbed her temples.

"How're you feeling?"

Rikki groaned. "Like I've been hit by a speedboat."

"Can't say I've ever been hit by one myself, but it sounds rather unpleasant," Lewis commented.

"Lewis, go find an open door and _shut it_."

Lewis feigned hurt, clutching at his chest as if he'd been stabbed. "Oh, the sarcasm hurts. How will I _ever_ _recover_?"

"I'm sure you'll figure something out."

* * *

><p>THIRD PERSON

Cleo chuckled, partly out of the badinage between Lewis and Rikki and partly out of relief that Rikki was finally awake and lucid again. A small ribbon of anxiety still remained, however. Even though both Rikki and Emma seemed to be improving since their conditions balanced each other out—personalities included—, there was no telling how long it would last or if there would be a sudden relapse and things would

go from bad to worse.

And Cleo didn't know if her powers were going to be next to go haywire on her.

"So... now what?" Rikki questioned with a sigh, wiping sweat off her flushed forehead and leaning back.

"Same thing we've been doing," Cleo said with a shrug. "We wait." Cleo's stomach tightened as she said the words.

Because sometimes waiting is the hardest thing to do.

Lewis noticed the slight hesitation in her voice and how her body language suggested she was about to bolt up and resume pacing like if she didn't go back and forth so many number of times she would lose it. He put an arm around her shoulders.

"Don't worry, Cleo. If anything happens, I'm right here."

Cleo nodded wordlessly and melted into his form somewhat tentatively.

That was what she was afraid of.

* * *

><p>To be continued...

So sorry this has taken so long. I kind of fell off the grid thanks to school activities and tests and what-not. But since summer has officially started up again, I'll try my best to push past this writer's block and keep the chapters coming. No idea how often I'll be able to update, but I promise I will not give up on this story until it's officially complete and I'm happy with it. :)

I'm not exactly sure anymore where I'm going with this story anymore, but I have a few ideas in mind.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. It's not the best by far, but it'll suffice until I decide to edit or make some changes. Not sure yet. Ha!

I'd like to say Thank You to all of you who have chosen to watch or favorite this story. It means A LOT to me and, quite honestly, makes my day knowing that somebody out there is looking forward to the next chapter. To be honest, I'm kind of addicted to reviews. But then again, who isn't? ;)

Thanks for reading and feel free to leave a review!

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Ideas? Randomness? Feel free to put it in a review or PM me at any time. I'll make sure to reply to any and all reviews and messages ASAP. I appreciate ALL reviews, but I prefer if they aren't anonymous so that I'll be able to reply.

I also apologize for this super long author's note.

Okay, that should do. Thanks again!

End
file.